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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: LIBERIAN SANCTIONS

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CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR HOWARD F. JETER. REASON 1.5
(B) AND (D).

1. (C) In the absence of Foreign Minister Lamido, Ambassador Jeter delivered talking points to Special Presidential Advisor Ad'obe Obe. The Ambassador stressed the importance of keeping pressure on Taylor who remained unrepentant in practice notwithstanding the nice sounds he made in public. Instead of cutting the RUF loose, Taylor still appeared to be harboring and abetting hard-line RUF elements. This continued association between Taylor and RUF miscreants could generate nothing but continued trouble for the sub-region. With the Sierra Leonean peace process at such a critical juncture, it would be counterproductive to give Taylor what amounted to a passing grade when he had not changed his stripes. If ECOWAS countries failed to support Resolution 1343 and continued pressure on the GOL, Taylor would be the winner and ECOWAS the loser. The rest of the world simply would not understand why the countries of the region were reluctant to keep sanctions on a leader who had brought so much grief, destruction and death to their own neighborhood, the Ambassador emphasized.

2. (C) Responding positively to the demarche, Obe stated that Nigeria had previously backed the sanctions and he saw no reason why it should change its vote. He stated that he would call Nigerian PermRep Mbanefo to discuss the issue.

3. (C) With ECOWAS ExSec Chambas and Deputy ExSec Diarra also out of town, the Ambassador delivered points to Military Advisor Col. Dikkio, the highest-ranking ECOWAS official available. Dikkio stated that he had visited Liberia as part of the ECOWAS fact-finding team to assess Liberian compliance with sanctions. The mission concluded the Taylor government was not fully compliant with all aspects of the sanctions regime but the Monrovia government had made improvements on regulating the diamond trade and in curtailing unregistered air traffic. When the Ambassador mentioned the mysterious airplane crash amid suspicions of arms trafficking earlier this year and Taylor's continued involvement with the RUF, Dikkio could not respond. Dikkio did state that the Secretariat believed the sanctions should be lifted to

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enable the GOL to fight the LURD and to alleviate the economic burden on the common Liberian.

4. (C) Ambassador replied that Taylor teamed with the RUF presented a much stronger threat to the sub-region than the LURD posed to Taylor. (Dikkio agreed that Taylor was purposefully overestimating the LURD threat.) Also, the Liberia's economy was not depressed because of the sanctions but due to Taylor's avarice and his running Liberia more like an armed camp than a country.

5. (C) The Ambassador stated that now was not the time to reward Taylor, especially with Sierra Leone at such a critical crossroads in its recovery. ECOWAS support for lifting the sanctions would diminish ECOWAS's standing in the international community, he asserted.

6. (C) In the end, Dikkio replied that ECOWAS was suffering from "Liberia fatigue," implying that lifting the sanctions would be a way to appease and make peace with Taylor. The Ambassador urged ECOWAS not to throw in the towel. Peace could not come by giving Taylor freer license but in keeping him under pressure and containing him. Peace and stability in the region ultimately depend on that.

